

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 SPC-03 SAM-01 AID-20 EB-11 NSC-10

RSC-01 CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-20 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02

FEA-02 INT-08 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00

XMB-07 OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01 DODE-00 FPC-01 NEA-11

PM-07 DRC-01 /183 W

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R 301247Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5191

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0185

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, MT, LY

SUBJ: PETROLEUM EXPLORATION STATUS REPORT

REF: A. VALLETTA 154 B. VALLETTA 2480, DEC. 17, 1973

1. DR. A. V. HYZLER MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT STATED IN ANSWER TO QUESTION BY OPPOSITION MEMBER DR. J. MUSCAT IN PARLIAMENT JAN 28 THAT NO RPT NO OFFSHORE OIL-DRILLING OPERATIONS CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS.

2. MUSCAT ASKED: "HOW MANY COMPANIES ARE CURRENTLY DRILLING FOR GAS IN MALTA? WHICH ARE THESE COMPANIES AND WHEN WAS THE WORK BEGUN? CAN INFORMATION BE GIVEN ABOUT PROGRESS MADE? HAVE ANY OF THE COMPANIES WITH-DRAWN THEIR DRILLING CONTRACT OR SUSPENDED OPERATIONS?"

3. HYZLER REPLIED: "DRILLING LICENCES ARE NOT
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SPEDIFICIALLY FOR GAS OR OIL BUT FOR CHYROCARBONS.

DRILLING AND EXPLORATIONS LICENCES FOR HYDROCARBONS ON MALTA'S CONTINENTAL SHELF, TO THE NORTH AND SOUTHEAST OF MALTA WERE GIVEN IN 1971. NO DRILLING IS GOING ON AT PRESENT. THE THREE COMPANIES CONCERNED ARE AQUITAINE MALTE, MALTA SHELL LIMITED, WHICH JOINED AGIP MALTA LTD. IN 1972, AND THE CONSORTIUM LED BY HOME OIL MALTA LTD. DRILLING OF THE FIRST WAS BEGUN ON NOVEMBER 7, 1971. THESE FOUR COMPANIES TOGETHER HAVE DRILLED FOUR WELLS. THE TECHNICAL DATA DERIVED AS A RESULT OF THE DRILLING AND OTHER WORKS ARE BEING STUDIED BY THE COMPANIES AND BY THE GOVERNMENT.

A PROGRAMME FOR THE DRILLING OF OTHER WELLS IN FUTURE WILL BE BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THESE STUDIES. THE PRODUCTION LICENCES GIVEN TO THESE COMPANIES ARE STILL IN FORCE."

4. COMMENT: IN SEPTEMBER 1972 HYZLER GAVE A SIMILARLY EVASIVE REPLY TO THE SAME SORT OF QUESTION, STATING THAT TECHNICAL DATA ACQUIRED FROM WELLS DRILLED SO FAR WERE BEING DRAWN UP. THREE MONTHS LATER GOM OFFERED FOR SALE SEISMIC DATA OF THE MDINA BANK AREA SOUTHWEST OF MALTA. A NUMBER OF BIDS ON NEW CONCESSIONS IN THE MDINA BANK AREA HAVE BEEN UNDER STUDY BY GOM AUTHORITIES FOR NEARLY SIX MONTHS. HYZLER'S REFUSAL TO ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THE ABSENCE OF DECISION ON THE AWARDED OF THESE NEW CONCESSIONS IS PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THE LACK OF INFORMATION PROVIDED ON OTHER OFFSHORE DRILLING AREAS. A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE DELAY REGARDING THE MDINA BANK CONCESSIONS IS THE ABSENCE OF AN AGREEMENT THUS FAR BETWEEN MALTA AND LIBYA ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEDIAN LINE WHICH WOULD DETERMINE THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF THE MDINA BANK CONCESSIONS (SEE REF A). HAVING PLACED MALTA IN A POSITION OF TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON LIBYA FOR ITS FUEL REQUIREMENTS, MINTOFF IS NOT IN AS STRONG A BARGAINING POSITION ON THIS QUESTION AS HE WAS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. GETZ

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Message Attributes

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